

Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

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S E C R E T CAIRO 18046

NODIS

FOR SAUNDERS FROM ATHERTON

USDEL NO.

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PERP SA US
SUBJECT: LETTER TO SECRETARY VANCE FROM FOREIGN
- MINISTER SAUD

REF: JIDDA 5595

1. I HAVE READ PRINCE SAUD'S LETTER CONTAINED REFTTEL
AND WANTED YOU TO HAVE MY THOUGHTS ON IT WHILE YOU ARE
PREPARING THE SECRETARY'S RESPONSE.

2. ALTHOUGH NOT SPECIFICALLY APPARENT FROM OUR REPORTING
CABLE (USDEL NO. 10), I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT AT NO TIME IN
MY CONVERSATION WITH SAUD DID I GIVE HIM ANY REASON TO
BELIEVE THAT WE ARE "RETURNING TO THE STEP-BY-STEP POLICY".
PERHAPS HE WAS PROVIDED BY HIS OWN NOTE-TAKER WITH A
GARBLED VERSION OF MY PRESENTATION. MORE LIKELY, THE
SAUDIS HAVE PROBABLY CONCLUDED THIS ON THEIR OWN BY A
MISINTERPRETATION OF WHAT OUR IDEAS AND PREFERRED METHOD
OF PROCEEDING MEAN, COMBINED WITH THEIR BELIEF THAT WE
COULD PRODUCE RAPID AND FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES IN THE ISRAELI

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POSITION BUT CHOOSE NOT TO DO SO. THEY MAY ALSO HAVE
GIVEN MORE CREDENCE THAN THEY SHOULD TO STORIES COMING
OUT OF ISRAEL CONCERNING BEGIN'S INTEREST IN "PARTIAL
AGREEMENTS:.

3. WHATEVER THE REASON, THE SECRETARY'S RESPONSE SHOULD
LEAVE NO DOUBT THAT WE ARE NOT RETURNING TO A STEP-BY-STEP

APPROACH, AND THAT SAUDI INTIMATIONS TO OTHER ARAB STATES TO THE CONTRARY ARE EXCEEDINGLY UNHELPFUL TO WHAT WE ARE IN FACT TRYING TO DO, WHICH REMAINS TO CONSTRUCT A FRAMEWORK FOR A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT. WE SHOULD ALSO MAKE THE POINT FORCEFULLY TO SAUD THAT THE IDEAS WE CONVEYED COMMIT ISRAEL AT THE OUTSET TO NEGOTIATING A FINAL PEACE TREATY FOR THE WEST BANK AND GAZA ON ALL THE PRINCIPLES OF RESOLUTION 242, INCLUDING THE PRINCIPLE OF WITHDRAWAL.

4. I HOPE YOU WILL ALSO PICK UP ON SAUD'S STATEMENTS THAT "DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS...IS NOT AN END IN ITSELF" AND "THE U.S. WILL NOT TAKE AN INDEPENDENT STANCE". WE CAN OBVIOUSLY AGREE WITH THE FORMER SINCE, AS I THOUGHT I HAD MADE CLEAR TO HIM, THE MEETING WE HAD HOPED TO HAVE WAS DESIGNED PRECISELY TO PROVIDE THE MOST EFFECTIVE SETTING IN WHICH TO ADOPT "AN INDEPENDENT STANCE". I THINK I EVEN MADE THE POINT EXPLICITLY TO HIM THAT WE DO NOT SEE DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS AS AN END IN THEMSELVES.

5. ON BALANCE, I THINK IT WOULD BE PREFERABLE TO REPLY TO THIS LETTER AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE, EVEN IF IT MEANS DOING SO BEFORE WE HAVE MADE FINAL DECISIONS ON PRECISELY WHERE WE GO FROM HERE. THE SAUDIS HAVE ALREADY PLAYED A VERY UNHELPFUL ROLE HERE IN EGYPT, AND ARE IN SECRET

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THE PROCESS OF PEDDLING THEIR MISGIVINGS THROUGHOUT THE AREA. WE CANNOT DETER THEM FROM TRYING TO RESTORE THE "ARAB CONSENSUS", BUT WE SHOULD NOT LET THEM MISREPRESENT OUR INTENTIONS IN THE PROCESS. EILTS

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